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# THE ORIGIN AND TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS. I

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## AN OUTLINE BIBLE-STUDY COURSE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

*The church at work is the church at study. Christians who give of their store of vitality and inspiration must also receive. Happy is the church to whose minister the direction of the study of his people is at least as important as his preaching ministry. The AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE seeks to save the energies and time of the minister in his educational work by giving him well-worked-out courses of study, sufficiently elementary for people of average intelligence; and to furnish to him also special suggestions for using these courses. With this number of the BIBLICAL WORLD, the eleventh of the outline-courses, presenting subjects of fundamental importance to Sunday-school teachers and to all Christian people young or old, is commenced. This course will be conducted for ten successive months. Reprints of each month's section will follow publication in the BIBLICAL WORLD and will be immediately available for classwork. The next and succeeding issues of the BIBLICAL WORLD will contain special suggestions for the leaders of classes. Correspondence should be addressed to the headquarters of the INSTITUTE, The University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.*

## FOREWORD TO THE STUDENT

All literature is an expression of the life of the times in which it arises. Only as one understands its origin can he appreciate fully its power and inner significance. This is especially true of biblical literature, the noblest expression of the deepest and purest passions ever aroused in the human race. These writers, above all others, have been sensitive both to the needs of men and to the sustaining power of God. Really to understand their messages we, too, must do our utmost to feel the needs of their times, and experience God's presence with like reverence.

As in the study of science or art, so in the approach to these books, we must bring to bear all possible intelligence and keen discrimination. Even to the slovenly spirit this literature may be an inspiration. To one filled with confident preconceptions, it may yield superficial results. But Bible-study should be a serious and honest business. Happy is he who learns to discern moral principles, who catches the larger sweep of thought in the author's mind, who can respond to the warm appeal of truth with hearty sympathy and a will to live.

In approaching a given letter or gospel one should take time, first of all, to grasp in its main outlines the entire course of thought, then, section by section, to note the relation of the part to the whole, and afterward more closely to study the details.

It is frequently helpful to paraphrase the materials, thoroughly to modernize the terms, especially of the more difficult passages. It is surprising how fresh and inspiring these writings become when put into everyday language.

In each day's study go over the Scripture passage at least once before reading the "Directions for Study." Cultivate independent discernment of thought.

Ask again and again the questions: Is this an essential, or only an accidental, in religion? Is there a better way to state this truth today? Can I honestly make this a part of my religion? Am I living up to my best light? How can I make this truth live for others? No person has a right to seek larger truth unless he is, with gratitude for his opportunity, also ready to build his life upon larger lines.

PERIODS OF EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY  
FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF LITERATURE

It is important in taking up the study of the books of the New Testament to remember that these books were not an isolated phenomenon, springing out of the ground, or let down from heaven. On the one hand they were the literary product of the new religious movement, as the church was its organized social product; Christian life was first, the church second, the books of the New Testament third. On the other hand, they were an integral part, but only a part of the literature of the period, being simply those Christian books of the first age of the church which the church of the second century selected from a larger number as those which expressed most purely the accepted faith of the church. Other books were written simultaneously and others were written afterward, all to meet the varying needs of the Christian community. From the point of view of literature, the first three centuries of Christian history may be divided into periods as follows:

I. *The Pre-literary Period*—

The period of exclusively oral teaching. No Christian literature produced that has been preserved. The Jewish sacred books were the Bible of Jesus and his followers. 25-50 A.D.

II. *The Beginning of Christian Literature*—

In letter-form; chiefly the letters of Paul, written to meet existing necessities, with no thought of their constituting literature. 50-65 A.D.

III. *The Period of Gospel Writing*—

The first conscious attempts to produce Christian literature. Letters continue to be written; apocalypses appear from time to time. To this period belong all of our four Gospels, as well as their sources, and various other Gospels that have not been preserved, or at least only in part. Here also belong the apostolic fathers: Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Ignatius, and Polycarp; probably also the Teaching of the Twelve. 65-125 A.D.

IV. *The Period of the Greek Apologists, and of the Rise of Gnostic Literature*—

Among apologists, we reckon Aristides, Quadratus, Justin Martyr, Tatian and Melito of Sardis. Among the gnostic writers of the period are Basilides, Valentinus, Heracleon, and Ptolemaeus. Other authors of the period are Papias, Hermas, and Marcion. 125-180 A.D.

V. *The Period of the Old Catholic Church*—

Christianity is now distinctly conscious of itself as an established religion with a recognized body of sacred literature, alongside of the Old Testament, which is also held sacred.

The literature of the period is anti-heretical and expository. The great writers are Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Hippolytus, and Origen (born about 185), and late in the period, Eusebius. 180-325 A.D.

THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARRANGED IN  
CLASSES AND BY DECADES

In studying the books of the New Testament from the point of view of their origin and original purpose, it is desirable to take them up in the order in which they were written, rather than in that in which they happen to stand in the New Testament. But it is also desirable to group them according to their authorship, so that books by the same author, or having common sources, may be considered together. The following table combines both these points of view as far as practicable. The Letters of Paul stand in the first column, the first three Gospels (which though not by the same author use to considerable extent the same sources) and the Book of Acts (by the same author as the Gospel) in the second column, the writings ascribed to John in the fourth column, and in the third column, the remaining books, by various authors. Horizontally the page is divided into spaces representing decades, and the various books are placed in squares indicating approximately the period in which each was written.

You will see some things at a glance. For example, nearly all, if not all, the letters of Paul were written before any of the other books of the New Testament. The Fourth Gospel and all the other books attributed to John were written thirty years after Paul had ceased writing, even if, as is perhaps the case, the Gospel and Epistles should be set down a decade earlier than they are. Some things, however, the chart cannot represent accurately. For example, out of the letters to Timothy and Titus probably only certain passages were written as early as they are set down, and the dates of the letters in the third column are all quite uncertain except Hebrews, and even this is not quite sure. But the chart as a whole will nevertheless show almost at a glance the general facts; and will indicate why we shall begin our study of the New Testament books with the Letters of Paul and among them with the Letters to the Thessalonians.

THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS ARRANGED IN CLASSES

A.D.	PAULINE EPISTLES	SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND ACTS	GENERAL EPISTLES	JOHANNINE LITERATURE
50	1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians Galatians 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Romans			
60	Philippians Philemon Colossians Ephesians 1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy	Mark	1 Peter	
70				
80		Matthew	Hebrews	
		Luke Acts	James	
90				
				Revelation
100			Jude 2 Peter	1 John 2 John 3 John Fourth Gospel
110				

## STUDY I

## CHAPTER I

## PAUL BEFORE HIS CONVERSION

*First day.*—§ 1. *His childhood:* Acts 22:3, 27, 28; 23:6, 16; Phil. 3:5. In order that we may gain a clear conception of the circumstances under which the first New Testament books arose, it is necessary to trace briefly the history of Paul,<sup>1</sup> our earliest writer, from his boyhood days to the period of his mature manhood. The materials for this sketch, all too few and scattered, will be found in Paul's letters and the Book of Acts.

Study carefully the passages suggested in § 1; locate Paul's birthplace upon the map. How would his life be influenced in those early days by the presence of father, mother, and sister in the home; by the stern religious spirit of his parents; by his non-Jewish neighbors; by the proud consciousness of his Roman citizenship?

*Second day.*—§ 2. *His education:* Acts 18:3; 22:3; 26:4, 5; Gal. 1:14. How large a place would religion occupy in Paul's thoughts; the awful sense of God; the observance of festivals and fasts; attendance upon services of worship; his father's, and perhaps his synagogue-teacher's, explanations of the divine words in the sacred rolls? Did he have a boy's longing to be a rich tent-maker, or possibly a great rabbi some day; a strong sense of duty; a determination to gain salvation through noble living; a deep love of Jewish traditions?

*Third day.*—§ 3. *His career as a Pharisee and a persecutor:* Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:5, 6; I Tim. 1:13; Acts 7:58—8:3; 22:4, 5, 20; 26:5, 9—11; I Cor. 15:9. Think as you read with what a shock Stephen's words about the Law and the reputed teaching of Jesus would fall upon the ears of the young student, Saul, now well along in his theological course under the great Gamaliel of Jerusalem and a zealous devotee of the law! Analyze clearly his motives as he undertakes to root out this dreadful heresy. How far did his zeal carry him; and did his conscience rebuke him or approve his course? Put yourself in Paul's place.

## CHAPTER II

## PAUL'S CONVERSION AND EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE

*Fourth day.*—§ 4. *His conversion:* Gal. 1:15—17; 2:19; I Cor. 9:1; 15:8; II Cor. 4:6; Phil. 3:7—11; Acts 9:1—19a; 22:5—16; 26:12—18. Read all the passages in the order given and account, step by step if you can, for the tremendous change which came over Paul at this juncture. Note especially what Paul says

<sup>1</sup> Saul was his more common Hebrew name; Paul, his Roman name, used altogether in later life.

in his letters about it. Picture the contradictory feelings which swept his soul for days and days, both before and after the crisis. Look back, with Paul, from this point over all his years of strenuous religious experience—at Tarsus, at Jerusalem, and now at Damascus. Do you wonder that he was deeply perplexed?

*Fifth day.*—§ 5. *In Damascus and Arabia:* Gal. 1:17b, 18a; II Cor. 11:32, 33; Acts 9:19b-25; 26:19, 20. What new convictions now become the burden of all Paul's thought and preaching? Consider the nature of his occupations and experiences in this first period of three years.

§ 6. *In Jerusalem, Syria, and Cilicia:* Gal. 1:18-24; Acts 9:26-31; 22:17-21. Read the various accounts of the visit to Jerusalem carefully, beginning with Gal. 1:18-24, noting (a) time, (b) motive, (c) persons met, apostles and others, their attitude toward him, (d) length of stay, (e) reasons for leaving. What events follow according to each account? Use the map continually.

### CHAPTER III

#### BEGINNINGS OF HIS BROADER CAREER

*Sixth day.*—§ 7. *Early ministry in Antioch:* Acts 11:19-26. Eleven "silent" years follow. Can we know, almost to a certainty, what Paul must have been doing? Why, indeed, should Paul be sought out for such a work as that in Antioch? Does he seem ready for the task? Has he matured somewhat during this past decade? Do Paul's energy and faith in Jesus as the Christ help to bring down the derisive name "Christians" upon the Antioch disciples of Jesus?

*Seventh day.*—§ 8. *Evangelistic work in Cyprus and Galatia:* Acts 13:1-52; 14:1-28. Consider the significance of this first long evangelistic tour of Paul and Barnabas. Why do they undertake it? Trace their movements carefully on the map. How do they decide as to the places in which they shall work? Do they labor primarily with Jews, or with Gentiles? Note the arguments with which they try to win converts. Why do they encounter such determined opposition? What people welcome their message? It is important to study Paul's simple plan of organizing believers into churches.

*Eighth day.*—§ 9. *Relations with the Jerusalem church leaders:* Gal. 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-29; Acts 15:30-35; Gal. 2:11-21. Read carefully Paul's statement of these events at Jerusalem in Gal. 2:1-10. What was the question at issue? Did Paul and the "Pillar Apostles" (as the apostles who had remained in Jerusalem were called) at first agree? Did they *come* to an agreement? What was it? Read Acts 15:1-35. Does this seem to refer to the same question as Gal. 2:1-10? Does the statement of the decision seem to agree with Paul's? (Some have thought that the Acts account must refer to a different event, but it is more likely that the differences in the accounts are due to the interval between the two writ-

ings.) Read Gal. 2:11-21. For what principle is Paul fighting on both these occasions, and why is he so strenuous about the matter? Does he ever recede from his position? Does he win or lose his point? Does he seem to be "speaking the truth in love"?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GOSPEL IN EUROPE: THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

*Ninth day.*—§ 10. *In Galatia again; and first work in Europe:* Acts 15:36-41; chaps. 16, 17; I Thess. 1:2-2:14; 3:1, 2; Phil. 4:15, 16.

What light does Paul's separation from Barnabas and Mark throw on his character? Why does he visit these Galatian disciple-groups again and again? Is this part of his established policy? Tell, in your own words, just why at this time, Paul decided to leave the important centers of Asia Minor for work in the unknown West? Again, for this second long journey, note every center of work, the obstacles met, the nature of the work attempted, and the success or failure resulting. Does Paul's message change with time and experience? Can Paul be classed as a real statesman-evangelist?

*Tenth day.*—§ 11. *Eighteen months in Corinth:* Acts 18:1-11; I Cor. 1:14-16; 2:1-5; 3:1, 2; 9:1, 2; II Cor. 11:7-9. From these passages construct as full a narrative as possible of Paul's first sojourn in Corinth. Note also that this brings us to the first of Paul's extant letters, I Thessalonians (cf. Acts 18:5; I Thess. 3:6).

*Eleventh day.*—§ 12. *The first letter to the Thessalonians.* We are now at the beginning of Christian literature. Was the apostle consciously beginning to create a literature to supplant or supplement the Old Testament? Are these letters formal documents, or passionate outpourings of a great soul strong in its determination to save these European brothers for Christ? In reading any letter it is desirable to have in mind the relation between the writer and his readers, and the circumstances that gave rise to the letter. Recalling, therefore, the founding of the church at Thessalonica, and the length of Paul's absence from them (2:17), notice that the letter was written from Corinth (cf. Acts 18:5 and I Thess. 3:6) and the circumstances immediately preceding the writing of the letter (2:17-3:6). For today read chaps. 1 and 2:1-16 (see the analysis below). Study Paul's gentle, tactful method of approach.

### ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

- I. Salutation (1:1).
- II. Reminiscence and Narrative; the apostle recounts his relations to the church of the Thessalonians up to the time of writing (1:2-3:13).

1. Reminiscences of his first preaching to the Thessalonians (1:2-10).
2. Review of his unselfish and sincere labor among them (2:1-12).
3. Thanksgiving to God for their acceptance of his message (2:13-16).
4. His desire to visit them (2:17-20).
5. Timothy's visit and Paul's joy at the news he brought (3:1-10).
6. Benediction (3:11-13).
- III. Instructions and Exhortations (4:1-5:24).
  1. Exhortation to pure and upright Christian living (4:1-12).
  2. Comfort and exhortation concerning Christ's coming again (4:13-5:11).
    - a) Comfort concerning them that fall asleep (4:13-18).
    - b) Exhortation to watchfulness and sobriety (5:1-11).
  3. Sundry brief exhortations (5:12-22).
  4. Benediction (5:23,24).
- IV. Conclusion (5:25-28).

*Twelfth day.*—Read in a similar way I Thess. 2:17-3:13, noticing also what facts respecting the movements of Paul and his companions are incidentally stated.

*Thirteenth day.*—Read I Thess. 4:1-12, observing what it shows as to the previous teaching of the apostle, the temptations and dangers of the gentile Christians, and the kind of morality taught by the apostle to the Gentiles.

*Fourteenth day.*—Read I Thess. 4:13-18, and noticing that the grief of the Thessalonians was caused by the thought that their friends who died would lose their part in the coming of the Lord, observe precisely what comfort the apostle gives them. Read 5:1-11, and notice carefully what Paul teaches as to the time of the Lord's coming, and the practical instruction which he bases on this.

*Fifteenth day.*—Read I Thess. 5:12-24 attentively. On vs. 23, recall the previous passages in the letter which mention the "day of the Lord." Read the apostle's closing words, vss. 25-28. Note especially the indication of the use which he intended should be made of the letter.

*Sixteenth day.*—§ 13. *The second letter to the Thessalonians.* II Thess. was probably written not long after I Thess. (cf. the opening salutation of each) possibly for a different group of the Christians in Thessalonica. Note the analysis below. Read chap. 1, considering what it shows as to the experiences through which the Thessalonians were passing, and the apostle's way of dealing with them.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

- I. Salutation (1:1, 2).
- II. Thanksgiving for the progress of the church and comfort to them in their persecutions (1:3-12).
- III. Errors concerning the Day of the Lord corrected (chap. 2).
- IV. Conclusion (chap. 3).

*Seventeenth day.*—Read II Thess. chap. 2. Much of this chapter is now very obscure, but notice its clear teaching concerning the effect which an expectation of the coming of the Lord ought to have.

*Eighteenth day.*—Read II Thess. chap. 3. See suggestions for thirteenth day. What sympathy and earnestness!

*Nineteenth day.*—Read again the passages cited under § 11, and write an account of Paul's work in Corinth, including the evidence from the letters to Thessalonica as well as from the account in Acts and the letters to Corinth.

*Twentieth day.*—Make a list of the cities visited by Paul in this first tour through Macedonia and Achaia, with a brief statement of the work done in each place (Acts 16, 17, 18:1-17).

*Twenty-first day.*—§ 14. *Return to Syria and stay at Antioch:* Acts 18:18-23*a*. Just why, and with what mingled emotions, does Paul hasten to visit "the church" at Jerusalem? Is his good news as heartily welcomed by the great leaders at the Jewish capital? Can you imagine Paul taking much of a vacation upon his return to headquarters at Antioch? Why does he seem to hurry to set out on a third long tour of his churches? Probably here at Antioch, Paul wrote his fighting epistle to the Galatian Christians. Let us see what stirred him so deeply and laid bare his great righteous soul to all generations.

*Twenty-second day.*—§ 15. *The letter to the Galatians.* It is always a matter of interest in studying a letter to know as much as possible about the writer and the persons addressed, especially in their relation to one another. Much of this information can be gained from the letter itself. Read Gal. 4:12-17, noticing (a) who first preached the gospel to the Galatians; (b) how they received the preacher and his message. Read Gal. 3:1-5, noticing (a) how Christ was first presented to the Galatians; (b) whether they began the Christian life by subjecting themselves to the law, or by simple faith in Christ, and dependence on the Spirit.

*Twenty-third day.*—Read Gal. 1:6-9, noticing the evidence that since the first reception of the gospel by the Galatians there had come among them men preaching a different type of Christianity. Note also how Paul regarded this other type of Christianity. Read Gal. 6:12, 13; 4:9, 10, and observe what were some of the characteristics of this "other gospel." From these characteristics, what would you infer as to the nationality of the preachers; were they Jews or Gentiles? Recall from the previous reading (a) who first preached the gospel to the Galatians; (b) the emphatic things in his preaching of the gospel; (c) who had since preached a different gospel; (d) wherein these later preachers differed from the apostle. Then read Gal. 1:6; 4:11, 19, 20; 5:10, and judge what degree of success these later preachers had had.

## ANALYSIS OF THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

## I. Introduction (1:1-10).

1. Salutation, including assertion of apostolic authority (1:1-5).
2. Indignant rebuke of the Galatian apostasy, virtually including the theme of the epistle: The gospel which Paul preached the true and only gospel (1:6-10).

## II. Apologetic (personal) Portion of the Epistle.

The general theme established by proving Paul's independence of all human authority and direct relation to Christ (1:11-2:21).

1. Proposition: Paul received his gospel not from men, but immediately from Christ (1:11, 12).
2. Proof: drawn from various periods of his life; including also in the latter part an exposition of his gospel (1:13-2:21).
  - a) From his life before his conversion (1:13, 14).
  - b) From his conduct just after his conversion (1:15-17).
  - c) From his first visit to Jerusalem (1:18-24).
  - d) From his conduct on a subsequent visit to Jerusalem (2:1-10).
  - e) From his conduct in resisting Peter at Antioch (2:11-14).
  - f) Continuation of his address at Antioch so stated as to be for the Galatians also an exposition of the gospel which Paul preached (2:15-21).

## III. Doctrinal Portion of the Epistle.

The doctrine of justification by faith (the distinctive doctrine of Paul's gospel as against his legalistic opponents) defended on its own merits, chiefly by showing that the "heirs of Abraham" are such by faith in Christ, not by works of law (chaps. 3, 4).

1. Appeal to the early Christian experience of the Galatians (3:1-5).
2. Argument from the fact of Abraham's justification by faith (3:6-9).
3. Argument from the curse which the law pronounces (3:10-14).
4. Argument from the chronological order of promise and law (3:15-22).
5. The temporary and inferior nature of the condition under the law (3:23-4:11).
6. Fervent exhortation, appealing to the former affection of the Galatians for Paul (4:12-20).
7. Allegorical argument from the two branches of the family of Abraham (4:21-31).

## IV. Hortatory Portion of the Epistle (5:1-6:10).

1. Exhortations directly connected with the doctrine of the epistle (chap. 5).
  - a) To stand fast in their freedom in Christ (5:1-12).
  - b) Not to convert liberty into license (5:13-26).
2. More general exhortations (6:1-10).

## V. Conclusion (6:11-18).

1. Final warning against the judaizers (6:11-16).
2. Appeal enforced by his own sufferings (6:17).
3. Benediction (6:18).

*Twenty-fourth day.*—The analysis of the letter given above should be constantly referred to in connection with the daily readings suggested below. Read Gal. 1:1-10, and notice (*a*) what Paul claims concerning his authority as an apostle; (*b*) concerning his gospel.

*Twenty-fifth day.*—Read Gal. 1:11, 12, and note what Paul says here concerning his gospel. Read Gal. 1:13-24 with the aid of the analysis. Notice that the facts here stated show how little connection Paul had with other Christians, either before or after his conversion. Consider how this tends to show that he could not have learned his gospel from men.

*Twenty-sixth day.*—Read Gal. 2:1-10, and present the scene clearly to your mind; then read 2:11-21; notice how, in both of these instances of difference of opinion between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles, his view finally prevailed, and observe the bearing of this upon his claim made in Gal. 1:11, 12.

*Twenty-seventh day.*—Bearing in mind that the false teachers had evidently tried to persuade the Galatians to receive circumcision, by urging that only thus could they become sons of Abraham and so heirs of the Scripture (Old Testament) promises of salvation, read Gal., chaps. 3 and 4, with the aid of the analysis; notice especially what Paul maintains, (*a*) as to how men become sons of Abraham, and (*b*) as to the permanence of the principle of faith given to Abraham, and (*c*) the superiority of the new era of faith brought in by Christ.

*Twenty-eighth day.*—Read Gal. 5:1-12, noticing what Paul maintains as to what it would mean for a gentile Christian who had already accepted Christianity by faith, to adopt circumcision. Read vss. 13-25, and note very carefully how Paul guards his readers against the thought that to be free from law is to be at liberty to follow fleshly impulses, and what he teaches to be the right way of living a Christian life (see especially vss. 16, 18, 25).

*Twenty-ninth day.*—Read Gal., chap. 6, with the aid of the analysis. What further aids to right living does Paul suggest?

*Thirtieth day.*—Review the letter as a whole, noting the frankness and familiarity with which this tireless worker writes. Can he be accused of being unduly egotistical? Does he succeed in his defense and contention? Note, above all, the varying passions which crowd upon one another in this brief letter. May we learn from this intensity and burning earnestness the great secret of Paul's success in winning many strong souls to the acceptance of his message?